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Finzsch, Norbert

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Conditions of Intolerance: Racism and the Construction of Social Reality

*Norbert Finzsch**

Abstract: The most frightening side-effects of unification for some of the Germans and for most of the awed foreign spectators was the resurgence of open German racism. Was there a racist tradition in Germany that linked 1933 with 1989? Was the womb still fertile from which fascism had crept? Or are these incidents only pointing at a long-term tendency in German history that has been directed towards exclusion of »foreigners«, immigrants and non-christians going back to the early nineteenth century? - The first part of this paper describes the different occasions in Germany and the United States. The second part proposes six areas of comparison one could look at in an attempt to correlate American and German concepts of racism, nationalism and xenophobia: 1) The early period of nationalism (1812—1850); 2) Expansion and Manifest Destiny (1848-1898); 3) »Scientific racism« and internal colonization (1870-1933); 4) Gender and Race; 5) Identity and marginalization; 6) Political parties and the racist/xenophobic impulse.- The third part discusses the "false" dichotomization of social history versus discourse analysis. Social history is discourse analysis with non-discursive practises left in.

* Address all communications to Norbert Finzsch, Universität Hamburg, Historisches Seminar, Von-Melle-Park 6, D-22085 Hamburg; e-mail: 100600.1124@compuserve.com oder NFinzsch@AOL.Com

1. The Occasion

1.1 Germany

German unification can be perceived as the return to normality in Europe, as post-established harmony within a nation, as the »growing together of something that had belonged together all the way« (Willy Brandt). With unification there came the end of dictatorship in East Germany, the discovery of the economic collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the repressive apparatus that ensured a quasi-total control of the citizens by the state, the demise of the one-party state and the establishment of a liberal western democracy. Unification also brought large-scale unemployment, the shutting down of large sectors of the East German economy, the dismanteling of welfare institutions, kindergardens, community centers and state maintained recreation facilities. Unification was blamed by many in the East and the West for an increased remarginalization of women in the former GDR and for a loss of cultural multiplicity. The most frightening side-effects of unification for some of the Germans and for most of the awed foreign spectators was the resurgence of open German racism. The sight of fire-bombed synagogues and shelters for foreigners, murdered African Germans or political refugees, the helplessness felt vis-a-vis skinheads chasing Vietnamese workers through the streets of East German towns and the emergence of a political discourse in which there was a »foreigners' question« (Ausländerfrage) rather than a »racism question« (Rassismusfrage), the double standard of police authorities who reacted belatedly if at all, made clear that Germany was far from normality. The reaction of the well-meaning majority of Germans in both parts of the nation was nevertheless coined by a deep misunderstanding of the reasons for the violent appearance of xenophobic thought and neo-fascist practice after 1990. Racism, contrary to what public opinion was, was not a phenomenon that was limited to the East and, still worse, it had been there a long time before unification was even considered a slim silver line on the political horizon. Those contemporaries who have been politically active in the years before 1990 know that neo-fascist groups, both fighting from the underground as acting publicly, have stuck out there heads as early as 1980. Antisemitic slurs or violations of Jewish cemeteries have been phenomena that have been with the West German public for quite a while, although incidents of racist outrages in West Germany have chronically been underreported by the media. Antisemitism, the stereotyping of the Jew as the Other as an antitype to an idealized German seemed to have been crucial to German Identity even after 1945.¹ Attacks on leftists, anti-semitic graffitti, frequent incidents of

¹ For the centrality of German antisemitism for the definition of »Germanness« see Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, New York 1970; George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, New York 1964 and Fritz Stern, *The Politics of*

gay-bashing, cooperation between seemingly unpolitical hooligans and organized and disciplined neo-fascist groups, fights between Turkish youths and German right wing radicals was a reality long before the Berlin Wall came down.² The fact that a majority of Germans in the East as well as in the West opposed violence against minorities and organized marches and candle-rallies is politically comforting but it deflects attention from the question, why all this could happen. Was there a racist tradition in Germany that linked 1933 with 1989? Was the womb still fertile from which fascism had crept? Or are these incidents only pointing at a long-term tendency in German history that has been directed towards exclusion of »foreigners«, immigrants and non-christians going back to the early nineteenth century? It may suffice to say that one could analyze German antisemitism, persecution of African Germans and

Cultural Dispair, New York 1965. I am heavily indebted to my friend and colleague Jeffrey Herf for pointing this out to me. Research on German antisemitism after 1945 is abundant. See Alphons Silbermann, *Der ungeliebte Jude: Zur Soziologie des Antisemitismus*, Zürich 1981. Alphons Silbermann, *Sind wir Antisemiten? Ausmaß und Wirkung eines sozialen Vorurteils in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Köln 1982. E. Simmel (ed.), *Antisemitismus: Mit Beiträgen von Adorno, Horkheimer, FrenkelBrunswick et al.*, Frankfurt 1993, repr. Boston 1946. G. B. Ginzel (ed.), *Antisemitismus: Erscheinungsform der Judenfeindschaft gestern und heute*, Köln 1991.

² For the reemergence of racism in Europe see Dimitrios Evrigenis (ed.), *Untersuchungsausschuß »Wiederaufleben des Faschismus und Rassismus in Europa«: Bericht über die Ergebnisse der Arbeiten*, Strasbourg 1985. Robert Krieps, *Fascisme et racisme en Europe*, Luxembourg 1983 (*Cahiers socialistes europeens* 1). For the continuity of racist thinking in West Germany see Joachim S. Hohmann, *Robert Ritter und die Erben der Kriminalbiologie: »Zigeunerforschung« im Nationalsozialismus und in Westdeutschland im Zeichen des Rassismus*, Frankfurt am Main, 1991 (*Studien zur Tsiganologie und Folkloristik* 4).

³ Whether racism was a necessary ingredient of (German) fascism is very much debated. See among others Robert Cecil, *The Myth of the Master Race: Alfred Rosenberg and Nazi Ideology*, London 1972. Renzo de Felice, *Le Fascisme: Un Totalitarisme à l'Italienne?* Paris 1988. See the latest contribution to this discussion by Umberto Eco, *UrFascism in: The New York Review of Books*, XLII, no. 11, June 22, 1995, 12-5. It also should be mentioned that racism in Germany is a phenomenon that antedates the emergence of proto- or pre-fascist positions considerably. See for instance Reinhold Grimm's contribution »Germans, Blacks, and Jews; or Is there a German Blackness of Its Own?« and Sander Gilman's outstanding piece on German fantasies about Black sexuality »Black Sexuality and Modern Consciousness«, both in: Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermans (eds.), *Blacks and German Culture*, Madison WI, London 1986. See also Sander L. Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*, Boston 1982 (*Perspectives on the Black World*). On the Treatment of African Germans before and after 1933 see Reiner Pommerin, *Sterilisierung der Rheinlandbastarde: Das Schicksal einer farbigen deutschen Minderheit, 1918 - 1937*, Düsseldorf 1979, and Fatima El-Tayeb, *Schwarze Deutsche im Kontext des Diskurses um »Rasse«, 1900-1933*, M.A. thesis, University of Hamburg 1995. On proto-fascist ideologies in Germany see Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, volume 1: *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, Oxford 1987.

discrimination of Polish immigrants in the nineteenth century as only preludes to a industrialized exploitation and mass murder of foreign workers (»Fremdarbeiter«, »Zwangsarbeiter«) and the planned annihilation of Jews and Gypsies after 1941.⁴ The emergence of the neo-fascist party NPD in the late 1960s emphasize the importance of the question of a political tradition of German fascism. Hoyerswerda, Rostock, Mölln and Solingen, name of cities in which racism showed its unveiled grimace, standing for pogroms which have become metonymical for German problems after 1989, were the subject of a heated political debate in Germany and in neighboring countries. It is very telling that politicians across party lines in Germany sought to downplay the impact of these incidents as exceptional and untypical with regards to anti-German sentiments in countries like Turkey, the United States and Israel for instance, while the same politicians took up the theme of the so-called »foreigners' problem« (Ausländerproblem) and turned it into political capital that could be usefully invested in German interior politics. It is no accident that racist terrorism coincided with the political debate on asylum law for refugees and the subsequent limitations of the right of asylum granted in the 1949 constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany.⁵

⁴ The best book on the general problem of »foreign« workers in Germany is Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880-1980: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter*, Berlin, Bonn 1986. For the Polish workers in Germany see Christoph Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet 1870-1945: Soziale Integration und nationale Subkultur einer Minderheit in der deutschen Industriegesellschaft*, Göttingen 1978 (*Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft* 30). More recent Ralf Koch, *Die »Fremdvölkischen« im Blick der Einheimischen: Polnische Wanderarbeiter in Deutschland während der Weimarer Republik*, *Deutsche Studien* 30 (117/118) 1993, 39-56. For the discourse on African Germans and their treatment in the Weimar Republic and under Hitler see Fatima El-Tayeb, *Schwarze Deutsche*, and Pommerin, *Rheinlandbastarde*. The literature on German antisemitism is far to extensive to even be mentioned in a footnote. I refer the reader to articles in this collection. As an introduction to the history of »modern« antisemitism see Hermann Greive, *Geschichte des modernen Antisemitismus in Deutschland*, Darmstadt 1983. The best introduction in English is probably still Peter G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*, New York, London, Sydney 1964. see also Reinhard Rürup, *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus: Studien zur »Judenfrage« der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, Göttingen 1975 (*Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft* 15). Rainer Walz debates the question whether premodern antisemitism was religious fanaticism or a form of racism in »Der vormoderne Antisemitismus: Religiöser Fanatismus oder Rassenwahn?«, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 260 (1995): 719-748. His conclusion is that premodern antisemitism must be seen in closer connection to racism as has heretofore been admitted. Walz therefore coins the new concept of »genealogical racism« to describe this form of antisemitism.

⁵ It may be noted that there were racist activities directed against foreign workers before 1933. John L. Kulczycki, *The Foreign Worker and the German Labor Movement : Xenophobia and Solidarity in the Coal Fields of the Ruhr, 1871-1914*, Oxford 1994.

Empirical research into racism after German unification is rare, maybe because it seems to be such a recent phenomenon.⁶ Sociologists Alphons Silbermann and Francis Hüsens argue convincingly that what happens in Germany after 1989 cannot — as it commonly is — be described as hostility against foreigners (»Ausländerfeindlichkeit«) because this concept is a euphemism concealing the fact that it is not foreigners who are the primary target of attacks. West Europeans and Caucasian Americans are not discriminated against or victimized. On the other hand, these authors warn, it is evident that German citizens of color are indeed terrorized and persecuted and that therefore »Ausländerfeindlichkeit« is a wrong concept at best, a political ruse at worst.⁷ In other words, the Other (das Fremde) is defined by the use of the category »race«.⁸ The knowledge that »race« is foremost a concept that by definition does not demand an »essential« (biologically defined) reality does not stop Silbermann and Hüsens from ultimately turning down the concept because »[...] one cannot speak of a »pure race« or »aryan race« in a biological sense [...]« Racism is defined, according to Robert Miles, as a set of values and practices framed as an *ideology* that constructs a social hierarchy due to perceived biological differences.¹⁰ The theoretically important advantage of a concept of racism that perceives race as an aporetic and ideological concept that nevertheless is used to construct reality is therefore given up. David Theo Goldberg has argued in »Racist Cultures« that there is no generic racism and that therefore one has to historicize the different racisms.¹¹

»There is no single (set of) transcendental determinant(s) that inevitably causes the occurrence of racism - be it in nature, or drive, or mode of production, or class formation. There are only the minutiae that make up the fabric of daily life and specific interests and values, the cultures out of which racialized discourse and racist expressions arise. Racist expressions become normalized in and through the prevailing categories of modernity's epistemes and institutionalized in modernity's various modes of social articulation and

⁶ The selective bibliography in Silbermann and Hüsens, *Der »normale« Haß*, 120-4, lists most of the empirical studies done in Germany between 1989 and 1994.

⁷ Alphons Silbermann; Francis Hüsens, *Der »normale« Haß auf die Fremden: Eine sozialwissenschaftliche Studie zu Ausmaß und Hintergründen von Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Deutschland*, München 1995, 4-5. The fact that the authors use the term »Fremdenfeindlichkeit«, best translated as xenophobia in their subtitle, may have to do with marketing. The term »racism« which is more appropriate, according to Silbermann and Hüsens, might mislead potential readers. Both authors, it should critically be remarked, remain very contradictory in the use of concepts that are supposed to denote racism and xenophobia.

⁸ Silbermann, Hüsens, *Der »normale« Haß*, 8.

⁹ Silbermann, Hüsens, *Der »normale« Haß*, 7.

¹⁰ Silbermann, Hüsens, *Der »normale« Haß*, 8.

¹¹ David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Cultures: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, Oxford, Cambridge 1993, 90. His earlier writings on the topic of racism include Davis Theo Goldberg (ed.) *Anatomy of Racism*, Minneapolis 1990.

power.«¹² In spite of Silbermann's and Hüsens's theoretical shortcomings, the results of their study are very important, and they confirm what Goldberg says about the importance of »learned« racism. Contrary to what German media had to say about the reasons why Germans target »foreigners« or »people of color« as victims for their attacks, it is not the uprooted segment of the German population that is exclusively receptive for racist positions. Unemployment, breakdown of the social network due to the unification process in the East, loss of economic status or other factors may play a role in the adaption and open acting-out of racist beliefs, but the number of upper middle class Germans with a university degree who are open to racist bias is impressive.¹³ For instance, 40 percent of this group think that German politics in the past have been »too friendly towards foreigners« [zu ausländerfreundlich] in comparison to 47 percent of the whole sample.¹⁴ German citizens who have slight xenophobic tendencies, according to Silbermann and Hüsers, make up to 35 percent of the total population, whereas 15 percent share middle to extreme dislike for foreigners or aliens.¹⁵ Thus it can be argued that xenophobia is a phenomenon that is »normal« in contemporary German society, almost independent of religious groups, geographical sections, class and gender.¹⁶ The only factor that evidently covaried with xenophobia was the ethnocentric-nationalist attitude of Germans. Put differently Germans tend to be most xenophobic or racist when they have internalized prejudices during their socialization. These prejudices can be classified in three categories, i.e. a) an irrational belief in the cultural superiority of Germany and Germans b) the irrational belief in national and/or ethnical differences between human beings that collectively justify judgments on groups c) an economic chauvinism [Wirtschaftschauvinismus] that justifies a leading role of Germany in comparison to other nations.¹⁷

The question, whether the »new« German racism was something that goes back all the way to 1933, whether it was the result of sudden social turbulences due to unification or whether it was something coexisting with modernity within a much larger chronological frame of reference was paramount for the understanding of racist discourse and racist practice in contemporary Germany.

The Second World War defines modern Germany in a lot of ways. The war earmarked the height of a catastrophic development of German history. Within the war period 1939 to 1945 the holocaust was the culmination point of something that can only be described as a racist war of extermination. Both »wars«, that war of aggression against »external« enemies and the »war«

¹² Goldberg, *Racist Cultures*, 90.

¹³ Silbermann, Hüsens, *Der »normale« Haß*, table 1, 23-25.

¹⁴ Silbermann, Hüsens, *Der »normale« Haß*, 24, question 13. See also *ibidem*, 49-50.

¹⁵ Silbermann, Hüsers, 40-1, graph 4.

¹⁶ There seems to be a slightly higher potential for xenophobic positions in the former GDR, although the authors warn of an overinterpretation of the data, which show low measures of correlation. Silbermann, Hüsers, *Der »normale« Haß*, 43-4.

¹⁷ Silbermann, Hüsers, *Der »normale« Haß*, 99-100.

against the phantasma of a perceived »internal« enemy unfolded as one war, inseparable from one another. The Second World War/Holocaust ended a German »Sonderweg« effectively, both insofar as it integrated West Germany in the Western bloc and East Germany in the Soviet camp and insofar as it established a western style democracy on (West) German territory which remained a democratic society for more than forty years. In that sense, the Second World War/Holocaust marks the »end of (West) German history«.¹⁸

The reemergence of open racism in German society after 1989 thus could be interpreted both as a relapse into Nazi traditions and as the result of a perverse process of »normalization«. This »normalization« started before 1989 in a scholarly debate on the comparability of Nazi genocide with atrocities committed under the communist regime in the Soviet Union (»Historikerstreit«) and was extended into a revisionist public discourse about whether there had actually been a holocaust (»Auschwitzliige«).¹⁹ The first debate broke out in the West German scholarly world and overflowed into the cultural realm as early as the summer of 1986.²⁰ It is important to notice that in the debate about the singularity of the holocaust in German and international history, most of the historians coming from the ranks of a (comparative) historical social sciences actually denied the possibility of comparison vis-a-vis Auschwitz and the planned and industrialized annihilation of Jews during World War II, whereas neohistoricists insisted on the possibility and feasibility of a comparison of the holocaust with other events in European history.²¹

¹⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, The Free Press, New York 1992. Fukuyama argues »[...] that liberal democracy may constitute the 'end point of mankind's ideological evolution' and the 'final form of human government,' and as such constituted the 'end of history.' Ibid., p. XI.

¹⁹ Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Assassins of Memory : Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust (European Perspectives)*, New York 1992 (European Perspectives).

²⁰ Stephen Brockmann: *The Politics of German History*, in: *History and Theory* 1990 29(2), pp. 179-189.

²¹ The literature on the »Historikerstreit« is vast. I only quote the most important contributions here: Phillippe Despoix (ed.) *Der deutsche Historikerstreit aus mitteleuropäischer Sicht*, Hamburg 1989 (Osteuropa Forum, vol. 77). Helmut Donat; Dietrich Beyrau, Dietrich (eds.) »Auschwitz erst möglich gemacht?«: Überlegungen zur jüngsten konservativen Geschichtsbewältigung ; mit einer Bibliographie zum »Historikerstreit«, Bremen 1991. Dan Diner Wolfgang Benz (eds.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*, Frankfurt a.M. 1988 (Fischer Taschenbücher, vol. 239). Rudolf Augstein (Comp.), »Historikerstreit«, *Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*, München 1987. Eike Hennig, *Zum Historikerstreit: Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Faschismus?*, Frankfurt 1988. Rachel J. Halverson, *Historiography and Fiction: Siegfried Lenz and the Historikerstreit*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1989. Dirk Kunert, *Deutschland im Krieg der Kontinente: Anmerkungen zum Historikerstreit*, Kiel 1987. *New German Critique*, Special Issue on the Historikerstreit, Ithaca NY 1988 (*New German Critique* no. 44).

If Goldberg is correct and *race* is one of the central conceptual inventions of modernity, marked by the formation of the 'West' at the end of the sixteenth century and solidified as Western world hegemony in the nineteenth century, then the reoccurrence of open racism in Germany after 1989 can also be understood as re-entry of Germany into discursive practices which are labeled modern. This identification of modernism with racism needs some further exploration, because it seems to contradict everything we think if we think of modernity.

At the core of the modernist project lay the insistence on individual equality. John Locke's *First Treatise on Government* (1689) rejected the idea of »[...] slavery or property in other persons as a justifiable state of civil society [...]«.²² But even Locke seemed to contradict his own initial statement on slavery in his *Second Treatise*, because he defines circumstances under which slavery could be justified, i.e. for persons otherwise facing death.²³ So, even the arch-apostle of enlightenment justified slavery not only in theory but as the secretary to the Carolina Proprietors of South Carolina, he actively protected it.²⁴ If one thinks this is at odds with the initial statements in the *First Treatise*, one should look at Locke's theory about human rationality. Anyone behaving irrationally, according to Locke, should not be considered a human but an animal or a machine. Rationality is the mark of human subjectivity and as such necessary to limit the natural equality of those being taken to be human.²⁵ Goldberg concludes: »Thus, Chomsky and Bracken are on firm grounds in concluding that classical empiricism could offer no conceptual barrier to the rise of racism, that historically it 'facilitated the articulation of racism.'«²⁶ Locke's position in the definition of racism is a central one, because his influence on thinkers like David Hume was pervasive. »Emphasis upon the autonomy and equality of rational subjects is a constitutive feature for eighteenth-century thought, though qualified by the sorts of racial limits on its extension that we have identified as a condition of Locke's conception.«²⁷

²² Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, p. 27. »Slavery is so vile and miserable an Estate of Man, and so directly opposite to the generous Temper and Courage of our Nation; that 'tis hardly to be conceived, that an *Englishman*, much less a *Gentleman*, should plead for't.« John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Notes by Peter Laslett*, Cambridge 1963, p. 159 (book I, chapter I).

²³ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 301-2, § 22, Chapter IV »Of Slavery«. Slaves are usually »[...] Captives taken in a just war [...] and are] by the Right of Nature subjected to the Absolute Dominion and Arbitrary Power of their Masters.« *Ibid.*, 340-1, § 85.

²⁴ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 27.

²⁵ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 27.

²⁶ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 28. He quotes Noah Chomsky, *Language and Responsibility*, New York 1977, 92-3 and H. Bracken, *Racism and Philosophy* 1978, in : *Philosophia* 8 (2-3) 1978:241-260, 250.

²⁷ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 28.

1.2 The United States

It is easy to draw a direct line from Locke's Two Treatises to the Declaration of Independence and to the Constitution of the United States. According to the Declaration of Independence, there are certain truths that are »self-evident«, i.e. that all men are created equal and that they possess unalienable rights. According to the Constitution, men should enjoy the pursuit of happiness, a phrase that was borrowed from Locke's and that was closely connected to property rights, which are also mentioned in the Constitution.²⁸ We have learned to accept these truths as the basis of constitutional law of the United States and as a precondition of modernity. How can racism thus be in concordance with these truths? It may suffice to point out some of the examples of racist exclusion in U.S. history between 1800 and 1950, in order to bring the seemingly contradiction between constitutional theory and political practice to the foreground.

Racism in the United States has had and still has many faces. Its historical form vary according to place, time and people involved. There is a mild, almost humorous form of racism that involves the minstrel show and its fictional character of Sambo²⁹ and there is the most open form of racist exclusion by violent means such as lynchings, pogroms (»race riots«) and upheaval.³⁰ Racism exposed African Americans to such very different practices as slavery, unfair wage differentials on the job and »legal« discrimination (segregation) in the public sphere of politics among others.³¹ Racism in the United States not only sought to exclude Blacks, but also Jewish Americans, Irish Americans, Chic anas and Chicanos, Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans, to name only a few groups. At about the same time, German fascist developed the idea of extermination camps, American racists founded »hate organizations« like the Columbians in Atlanta Georgia.³² Ties to organized German racism was so strong in the United States, that some authors speak of a Nazi connection.³³ The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and 1930s targeted African Americans and Jews

²⁸ Leonard W. Levy, *Original Intent and the Framers' Constitution*, New York, London 1988, 276.

²⁹ Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester*, New York 1986.

³⁰ Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery*, Amherst, MA 1988. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930*, Urbana, Chicago, 1993. Norbert Finzsch, *Rassistische Gewalt im Süden der USA, 1865-1920*«, in: *Kriminologisches Journal* 26 (1994): 191-209. One of the examples of racist motivated programs against Chicanos and blacks are the zoot-suit riots during the 1940s. Stuart Cosgrove, *The Zoot-Suit and Style Warfare*, in: *History Workshop Journal* 1985 (18): 77-91.

³¹ Steven Shulman and William Darity, William, Jr. (eds.), *The Question of Discrimination: Racial Inequality in the U.S. Labor Market*, Middletown, CN 1989.

³² J. Wayne Dudley, »Hate« Organizations of the 1940s: The Columbians, INC., in: *Phylon* 1981 42(3): 262-274.

³³ Stefan Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection : Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism*, New York 1994.

alike in its attempt to control migration of Catholics, Blacks and Jews into the Midwest and presently the KKK experiences a resurgence.³⁴

Mexican Americans, Californios and Chicanos were among the groups that suffered discrimination as early as 1848, after the acquisition of Mexican territories as a result of the Mexican-American War.³⁵ Chicanos and African Americans until today experience racial/ethnic differences in criminal sentencing, as can be shown by the analysis of recent guilty pleas before Californian courts in the 1970s.³⁶ Chinese Americans, whose ancestors had come to California during the early days of the California Gold Rush, were discriminated from the very beginning of their life in America.³⁷ Japanese

³⁴ The recent literature on the history of the KKK is vast. It may suffice to quote just the most important works published after 1980 here. For an introduction into the older literature see the bibliography by Lenwood G. Davis and Janet L. Sims-Wood (comps.), *The Ku Klux Klan: A Bibliography*, Westport CN 1984. A discussion of the KKK in the 1920's is to be found in Shawn Lay (ed.) *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920's*, Urbana 1992. Important for a history of the early KKK are M. William Lutholtz, *Grand Dragon: D. C. Stephenson and the Ku Klux Klan in Indiana*, West Lafayette IN 1991. Richard K. Tucker, *The Dragon and the Cross: The Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Middle America*, Hamden CN 1991. Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920's*, Berkeley CA 1990. Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928*, Chapel Hill NC 1991. Michael W. Schuyler, *The Ku Klux Klan in Nebraska, 1920-1930*, in: *Nebraska History* 1985 66(3): 234-256. The best reference tool for the KKK is Michael Newton and Judy Ann Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan: An Encyclopedia*, New York 1991. The latest activities of the KKK are covered in the following titles: Elizabeth Wheaton, *Codename Greenkill: The 1979 Greensboro Killings*, Athens GA 1987. For the special treatment the KKK receives in the media and by some legal authorities see the article by the Institute for Southern Studies, *The Third of November*, in: *Southern Exposure* 1981 9(3): 55-67. The same incident is analyzed by Michael Parenti and Carolyn Kazdin, *The Untold Story of Greensboro Massacre*, in: *Monthly Review* 1981 33(6): 42-50. Also important Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America*, New York 1987. Michael Zatarain, David Duke: *Evolution of a Klansman*, Gretna LA, 1990. For the latest antisemitic activities of the KKK see Richard Yaffe, *The Grand Dragon Runs for Congress*, in: *Present Tense* 1981 8(4): 25-30. For the Reemergence of the Klan in the 1960s see Baxter Smith, *The Resurgence of the KKK*, in: *Black Scholar* 1981 12(1): 25-30. For a summary treatment of antisemitism in the United States see Steven Bowman, *Anti-Semitism and Antisemitism: A Review Essay*, in: *American Jewish History* 1990 79(4): 553-564. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home : Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience*, New York , 1987. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, New York 1994.

³⁵ Norbert Finzsch, »Anti-Mexican 'Nativism' in the California Gold Mines, 1848-1856«, in: *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas* 21, 1984: 283-302.

³⁶ Marjorie S. Zatz, Pleas, Priors, and Prison: Racial/Ethnic Differences in Sentencing, in: *Social Science Research* 1985 14(2): 169-193.

³⁷ Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, *The Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, Reprint ed. (original publ. 1939). Urbana IL 1991. Gunther Barth, *Bitter Strength*. Chiu Piu.

Americans, although fighting against Japan in the U.S. armed forces during World War II, were interned in concentration camps in the West of the United States.³⁸ Not in all cases racist practice was used against specific groups by the dominant White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Minority. Groups that are marginalized have apparently integrated racist exclusion in their own agenda. There is, only to mention one example, open racism directed against Jewish Americans by African Americans. The history of black and Jewish cooperation is as long as the history of their divergencies. As early as in the 1910s, two elite groups of minority leaders - wealthy, established, German Jews and Northern, well-educated blacks - collaborated to effect assimilationist policies and strategies for their respective minority communities as a response to nativism and racism in American society.³⁹ African Americans were first among the Americans who protested against German persecution of the Jews in Europe after 1933, although there was evidence for growing anti-semitism in the black ghettos because of the deteriorating economic conditions in these areas for which Jews were held responsible. On the other hand, organized blacks, represented by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, were almost alone in promptly condemning Hitler.⁴⁰ This »natural alliance« between Jews and Blacks had never been as natural and easy as some observers had wished it to be.⁴¹ In the 1960s already there occurred a breach

Norbert Finzsch, *Die Goldgräber Kaliforniens: Arbeitsbedingungen, Lebensstandard und politisches System um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Göttingen 1982 (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft Bd. 53), 60-66. Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1971. Andrew Gyory, *Rolling in the Dirt: The Origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Politics of Racism, 1870-1882*, Dissertation University of Massachusetts 1991. Robert J. Chandler, »Anti-Coolie Rabies«: The Chinese Issue in California Politics in the 1860s, in: *Pacific History* 1984 28(1): 29-42. Ramon D. Chacon, The Beginning of Racial Segregation: The Chinese in West Fresno and Chinatown's Role as Red Light District, in: *Southern California Quarterly* 1988 70(4): 371-398. Bess Beatty, The Loo Chang Case in Waynesboro: A Case Study of Sionphobia in Georgia, in: *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 1983 67(1): 35-48.

³⁸ Roger Daniels, *Concentration Camps U.S.A.: Japanese Americans and World War II*, New York 1971. Richard Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps*: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism, Berkeley Ca 1987. R. Bill Hosokawa, When Seattle's Japanese Vanished, in: *Annals of the Chinese Historical Society of the Pacific Northwest* 1984: 90-94.

³⁹ David Levering Lewis, *Parallels and Divergencies: Assimilationist Strategies of Afro-American and Jewish Elites from 1910 to the Early 1930's*, *Journal of American History* 1984 71(3): 543-564.

⁴⁰ Bat-Ami Zucker, Black Americans' Reaction to the Persecution of European Jews, in: *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 1986 3: 177-197.

⁴¹ Although it should be noted that detailed historical research in this area is missing. See John Bracey and August Meier, Research Comment: Towards a Research Agenda on Blacks and Jews in United States History, in: *Journal of American Ethnic History* 1993 12(3):60-67.

between both groups that climaxed in recent racist accusations of some black leaders, among them Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam.⁴² Although analysts of this conflict tend to avoid the word »racism« in connection with intra-minority conflicts as in this case, it is evident that racist assumptions and exclusions even between minorities, it seems, are deeply engrained into the texture of American culture. Recently, increased antisemitic attacks have been promoted by members of the fundamentalist christian right.⁴³ The United States do have a racist culture and Germany definitely has had and still has one although I am convinced that both differ in many respects. This (somewhat premature) conclusion led us to compare the racist cultures of Germany and the United States over time.

2. Theory

2.1 Racisms

Racisms involve the promotion of exclusions, or the actual exclusion of people due to their assumed membership in racial groups, however racial groups are taken to be constituted. Racists are persons who explicetely or implicitly ascribe racial characteristics of others that ostensibly differ from their own group. These ascriptions must not merely propose racial differences; they must also assign racial preferences or »explain« racial differences as natural, inevitable and therefore unchangeable, or express desired, intended, or actual inclusions or exclusions, entitlements or restrictions.⁴⁴ Nation has both a conceptual and a social history intersecting with the history of the concept race. Here again, the Enlightenment made the connection between deemed national characteristics and racial ones. The great nationalist drives of the late nineteenth century and the legislation restricting immigration in the twentieth century in the United States and Germany were imposed in the name of national self-consciousness and were in both countries (implicitly) racialized. In Germany this was achieved by founding the definition of citizenship on the basis of German »blood« in 1913. In the United States, the fact that immigration quotas differentiated between members of different nations (and thus »races«).⁴⁵

⁴² Nancy L. Green, *Juifs et Noirs aux Etats-Unis: La Rupture d'une »Alliance Naturelle«*, in: *Annales: Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, 1987 42(2): 445—464. Edwin Black, *Farrakhan and the Jews*, in: *Midstream* 1986 32(7): 3-6. Earl Raab, *Interracial Conflict and American Jews*, in: *Patterns of Prejudice* 1991 25(1): 46-61. See also Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times between Blacks and Jews in America*, New York 1988.

⁴³ David A. Rausch, *Fundamentalist-Evangelicals and Anti-Semitism* Philadelphia, 1993.

⁴⁴ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 98.

⁴⁵ David H. Reimers, *History of Recent Immigration Regulations*, in: *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 1992 136(2): 176-187.

The relation between nation and race thus needs to be explored as well. Are both identities involving ties that are unchosen, as B. Anderson suggests?⁴⁶ Can race and nation be equated conceptually and by extension racism and nationalism? Is it possible, according to J. Weinroth, to explain the relationship between both identities by saying that thinking in terms of race is racism and thinking in terms of nation is nationalism and racism at the same time?⁴⁷ Are racism and anti-semitism just »derivatives« of nationalism, as T. Nairn concludes?⁴⁸

In my opinion, it is more productive to think of race and nation as signifying intersecting discourses of modernist anonymity. They constitute two discourses that may at times run parallel to each other, at other times they may be independent of each other and sometimes they may even outright contradict each other. Another factor is that of chronology: Discourses come to the »surface« at different times, there is no necessary chronological continuity, and therefore it is conceivable that discursive fields »nation« and »race« emerge at different times.⁴⁹ Here again, it is important to historicize both discourses. As concepts, both nation and race of course are largely empty »receptacles« that allow the invention of groups as »imagined communities« according to Zygmunt Bauman.⁵⁰ Bauman, following therein Michel Foucault, identified the heart of the modern project as the concern with order.⁵¹ In very much the same way that »nature« is dominated by »reason«, in the same way that »reason« makes »nature« transparent by imposing laws of nature and by the

⁴⁶ Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983, 135-6.

⁴⁷ J. Weinroth, *Nation and Race: Two Destructive Concepts*, in: *Philosophy Forum* 1979 16: 67-86.

⁴⁸ Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, London 1980, 337.

⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *Archäologie des Wissens*, Frankfurt am Main, 1973, 71. English edition : Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London 1972 (*World of Man*).

⁵⁰ This contradicts the findings of German historians, among whom Rudolph von Thadden is very prominent. Von Thadden wants to expand the notion of nation from a narrowly defined community of ethnic descent to a nation of citizens (*Staatsbürgernation*). He thus defines nation as a central category of culture by claiming among other things that »nation as a space for greater possibilities of development does make sense.« According to von Thadden, democracy and the democratic challenge make it mandatory to maintain nation as a space of a public political discourse. Rudolph von Thadden, *Nation muß sein - aber wozu?*, in: *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 45 (1994):341-346, 345.

⁵¹ Foucault defined racism as a means to differentiate groups of people in a biologically defined sphere. Fragmentation in the interest of a statist bio-power, i.e. order within a biological continuum, therefore constitutes the core of racism. Michel Foucault, *Leben machen und sterben lassen, Tüte-Sonderbeilage »Wissen und Macht - Die Krise des Regierens«*, Dezember 1994, 15-19. Translation of a lecture by Michel Foucault at the Collège de France in March of 1976, first published in *Le Temps Modernes*, February 1991.

classification of nature, by design, manipulation, bureaucratic management and (social) engineering, modernity commits itself to the idea of constant and continuous progress.⁵²

Another constant of modernity's self-conception is the notion of a Subject that is not a social subject, but rather abstract and atomistic, general and universal, »[...] divorced from the contingencies of historicity as it is from the particularities of social and political relations and identities.«⁵³ This Subject is commanded by Reason and it is by using Reason that it is supposed to mediate the differences and contradictions of market and morality, polity and legality. Race as an universal idea serves a unifying functions by drawing disparate social subjects together in a cohesive unit in terms of which common interests are constructed. Race is able to fulfill this mission because it is both sufficiently broad and conceptually almost empty. The identity between subjects thus provided stretches across time and space, a necessary requisite, because it thus allows to take over as its own the connotations of prevailing scientific and social discourses. By integrating these connotations, race is able to determine scientific and political agendas, to patrol the borders of the application of reason. It is one of the prime devices of exclusion.⁵⁴

How much racist discourse is at the center of modernity and liberalism can be demonstrated by looking at the principal texts of enlightenment and its utilitarian and welfarist continuation. There is a core of central ideas in the writing of thinkers like Hobbes, John Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Bentham, James and John Stuart Mill, that identifies them as liberals and modernists. Liberalism is committed to individualism and it is founded in universal principles applicable to all human beings. The philosophical basis of this broad human identity (»human nature«) lies, according to liberalism, within the rational core of every individual, in the possibility to be moved by reason. Enter progress: If man is reasonable in his/her core then all social arrangements may be ameliorated by reform. If reform is continued and carried on on different levels (moral, economic, political and cultural) then the result is progress.

Another result of the application of liberal theory is its commitment to equality. If all human beings are open to reasonable arguments, if there is a common moral standing among humans, then equality of individuals in the political and legal sense is mandatory.⁵⁵ In that sense, race does not exist as a moral category. A morally irrelevant category between individuals is a category that they cannot be held responsible for. Thus liberalism seems to be immune against intrusions of racism, since moral judgment is based exclusively on the

⁵² Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, Ithaca NY 1991, 8. Other texts by Bauman on problems of modernity include *Zygmunt Bauman, Legislators and Interpreters: On Modernity, Post-Modernity and Intellectuals*, Cambridge 1987.

⁵³ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 4.

⁵⁴ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 4.

⁵⁵ John Gray, *Liberalism*, Minneapolis 1986, ix-xi, 45-57.

deliberate choices made by individuals. Since race is not open for choice, liberalism is supposed to be color blind. This statements is at odds with the overwhelming record of moral appeals to race in the writings of the areopagus of liberalism. Examples for this concern of liberals with race despite the philosophical tenets of liberalism are frequent and it may suffice to point at three thinkers who stand for the whole group. Kant, a philosopher with antisemitic leanings, for instance, in approving David Hume's racist bias against Africans, insisted on the inborn stupidity of Blacks.⁵⁶ John Stuart Mill linked the presupposed »uncivilized« state of non-white nations with their lacking capability to self-government, thus ideologically preparing colonialization of theses nations by Europeans. Thomas Jefferson, founding-father of the American democracy and author of the already cited Declaration of Independence not only was a slave-holder, but theorized about the lesser status of Native Americans in comparison to white Americans and Europeans.⁵⁷

When we say that race is »almost« conceptually empty or vacuous, the question is legitimate, what is the conceptual residue of race? It is important to note that the minimal significance of race does not so much concern biological but *naturalized* group relations. By this I mean the indentification of race with culture for instance, a definition that avoids making reference to biological principles altogether. When Margaret Thatcher addressed the issue of British politics of immigration in 1978, she cited the fear of Britains of being »swamped by people [from ex-colonies of Great Britain] with a different culture.«⁵⁸ In this »new racism« race is coded as culture and therefore it is safe to claim that it is conceptually possible to think of race in other terms than biological (genetical) heritability.

Racism cannot be reduced to a single univocal model. Any explanation of racism for example that rests on the assumption of racism based on irrationality, blocks out the fact that racism may very well be employed rationally in order to achieve certain ends. Racisms may very well have logics of their own.

⁵⁶ For Kant's antisemitism see Paul Lawrence Rose, *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner*, Princeton NJ, 1990. For antisemitic positions among the cultural heroes of Western civilization see Nancy Harrowitz (ed.) *Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Cultural Heroes* (Themes in the History of Philosophy Series), Philadelphia 1994.

⁵⁷ See John C. Miller, *The Wolf by the Ears: Thomas Jefferson and Slavery*, New York 1977, repr. Charlottesville VA 1991. Bernard W. Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian*, New York, London 1973. Norbert Finzsch, Meriwether Lewis' und William Clarks transkontinentale Entdeckung und ihre Beschreibung der Indianer im Louisiana Territory, 1804-1806, in: Felix Becker et al. (eds.), *Iberische Welten: Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Günther Kahle*, Köln, Weimar, Wien 1994, 783-812, 786.

⁵⁸ Citation in Bernstein, *Racist Culture*, 73.

2.2 Comparisons

It has been argued that historians and political scientists are not supposed to confound scholarly interests with political identification. In one of the introductions to historiography which were used in German undergraduate seminars as late as 1990 one can read that it is one of the »[...] unrelinquishable scholarly attitudes« of historicism to do away with anything that could smack of ideological tendency.⁵⁹ »Sine ira et studio«⁶⁰ has been the motto for historians brought up in the historicist tradition of late-nineteenth-century German historiography. In the words of Leopold von Ranke this principle reads »I wish to efface my soul as it were [...]«⁶¹. Compare this claim to historical objectivity to what two leading German Nazi-historians had to say about their relationship to »facts« and »truth« and their role within a nation that they perceived as finally liberated from the »onslaught« of western democracy. Walter Frank for instance, described the positions of German historians vis-à-vis the fascist regime during a speech given on the occasion of the opening of the Institute for Modern German History in 1935. Historians, according to Frank, were soldiers, both for the Third Reich as within »newly experienced scholarship*« (»neu erlebte Wissenschaft«). Scholarly objectivity for Frank was nothing more than an expression of bourgeois security (»bürgerliche Sekuritat«), in which the denounced historians had come to grow up.⁶² His speech climaxed in the emphatic appeal to his fellow historians, when he said »To be German means Ernesty. To be German means Thoroughness. To be German means Conscience. To be German means to go back to the reasons even if one goes to ruin over them.«⁶³ Another well known Nazi Historian was Karl Alexander von Müller, who expressed his dedication to the fascist regime in 1936, when he took over the editorship of Germany's most prestigious scholarly journal, the »Historische Zeitschrift« from Friedrich Meinecke. He too spoke of historians as soldiers and of the necessity to adhere to an ideology (»Weltanschauung«) that would help to deal with the increasing body of historical evidence. Political activism, according to von Müller, lent wings to

⁵⁹ »Der Historismus hat dieses Ideal aufgegriffen und zu einer gleichsam unabdingbaren wissenschaftlichen Haltung [my emphasis, N.F.] bei der Beschreibung historischer Phänomene erhoben.« Egon Boshof, Kurt Düwell, Hans Kloft, Grundlagen des Studiums der Geschichte: Eine Einführung, Köln, Wien 1979, p.12.

⁶⁰ Francis R. Goodyear (ed.), The Annals of [Publius C.] Tacitus, Books 1-6, Cambridge 1981 (Cambridge Classical Texts and Commentaries 23), I 1,3.

⁶¹ Leopold von Ranke, Sämtliche Werke, Leipzig 1875, vol. XV, p. 103.

⁶² Fritz Stern (ed.), Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung: Möglichkeiten, Aufgaben, Methoden. Texte von Voltaire bis zur Gegenwart, München 1966, 351-2. Stern's book appeared as early as 1956 under its original title »The Varieties of History: From Voltaire to the Present«, Cleveland OH. Since the quoted texts are written in German originally, I took the liberty to use the German edition.

⁶³ Stern, Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung, 352.

historiography. History thus needed the Nazi ideology to be rejuvenated, according to von Müller.⁶⁴

When German fascism was defeated in 1945, it was the historicist tradition instead, that was rejuvenated. Apparently political partisanship in the interest of the Nazis and the dismissal of objectivity had put historiography in jeopardy. It appeared as if the effacement of the historians' souls was the prerequisite to gaining independence from political intrusion. Identification with (fascist) ideology had done a disservice to historiography and therefore German historians stopped thinking about the impact of historical enquiry on politics. The abuse of historians in East Germany in the service of a state socialist ideology after 1949 did not increase the tendency of West German Historians to theoretically tackle the question of political responsibility of historians and political scientists. Another tenet of the myth of objectivity was that historians should not study the history of problems if they were themselves politically involved in them. Objectivity demanded distance and a deliberate effort of distancing oneself from the object under study and political or social interest was perceived as contra-productive for scholarly work. This is an approach to the problem of the »interest of knowledge« (Erkenntnisinteresse) that has lost some of its influence in Germany as well as in the United States, but that still can be felt in discussions on methodology and theory.⁶⁵ With the advent of the history workshop-movement in Germany, the greater impact and relevance of Women's and Everyday history (Alltagsgeschichte) in the 1980s, there occurred an epistemological shift in historiography which made it more acceptable to write from a position of concern and personal involvement. Whole neighborhoods set out to discover and »repossess« »their« history, minorities started to write their own history, women's historians (who were exclusively female in the early days of German Women's history) could not possibly write without being »close« to their scholarly field.⁶⁶

Add to this the fact that the neo-historicist tradition has only been questioned by social historians of the Bielefeld School and one understands the deep split of German historiography in the 1980's. In a way, this new historiography, only understandable as the German adaptation of the new social history created in the United States in the 1970s, reflected (West) Germany's way to

⁶⁴ Stern, *Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung*, 354-5. It is hard to sum up the gist of von Müller's article, since it is more rhetoric than historical or scholarly argument.

⁶⁵ Frederic Cople Jaher in 1995 pointed out that a »[...] generation ago the wisdom of the profession was that minority groups should not study their own history.« Frederic Cople Jaher, *Conflict between Jews and Christians and within the Jewish Community in America*, in: *Reviews in American History* 23 (1995), 360-363, 360.

⁶⁶ Again, I have to rely on my reader's intellectual magnanimity for not laying out the details of this development in this introduction. Gerhard Paul, Bernard Schoßig (eds.), *Die andere Geschichte: Geschichte von unten, Spurensicherung, ökologische Geschichte, Geschichtswerkstätten*, Köln 1986, which gives a good impression on the variety of topics that were dealt with under the rubric of Everyday history.

historiographical modernity. Seen from a methodological point, modern (social) history, defined by some historians as a historical social science, by others as historical social research, depends on comparison as a heuristic tool. This modern interpretation of historiography did away with the older historicist notion of »understanding« and the singularity of historical events and processes which made it impossible for historians to compare and evaluate.⁶⁷ Theodor Schieder noted as late as 1968 that a simple and complete subordination of history under the laws of the social sciences was not possible.⁶⁸ In the early 1970s there occurred a shift of paradigms in Germany - away from historicist insistence on the singularity of historical events to a historiography that included - at least implicitly - comparison as one of the decisive heuristic tools. In the United States this paradigmatic shift had occurred earlier and therefore there was more of a consensus among American historians that comparative history was worthwhile and fruitful under certain conditions.

In Germany however, the shift co-incided with the aftermath of the social upheaval of the student's movement and amidst the reforms which were generated in a social climate hostile to conservatism. Therefore the whole debate on social historical research became heated and controversial in a way it never had been in the United States. The relationship between German historians and the past seemed to shift with this paradigmatic novelty, at least if we believe Jürgen Kocka. The new elementary experience of historians in the seventies centered around the defining power of collective socio-economic structures and processes.⁶⁹ These structures and processes are by definition general. Historical social science drove to understand the super-individual

⁶⁷ Although it should be mentioned that even Wilhelm Dilthey, the arch-apostle of German historicism wrote, that a comparative method was indispensable even in relation to individual phenomena. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften. Gesammelte Schriften VII*, Stuttgart, Göttingen, 1961, 3rd edition, 226. In my argument on the indispensability of comparison as a category of historical understanding I follow my own research. Viz. Norbert Finzsch, *Reconstruction and »Wiederaufbau« in German and American Perspective: Some Remarks on the Comparison of Singular Developments, »Sonderweg« and Exceptionalism*, in: Norbert Finzsch and Jürgen Martschukat (eds.), *Reconstruction and »Wiederaufbau« in Germany and the United States: 1865, 1945 and 1989*, London 1996 (Germany and the United States of America: The Krefeld Historical Symposia - Volume 4), forthcoming. Thomas Haussmann analyzes in how far even the protagonists of the »new« history cannot do without »understanding« as a crucial concept of historical research. Thomas Haussmann, *Erklären und Verstehen: Zur Theorie und Pragmatik der Geschichtswissenschaft. Mit einer Fallstudie über die Geschichtsschreibung zum deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1918*, Frankfurt 1991, 278-301.

⁶⁸ Theodor Schieder, *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen vergleichender Methoden in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: Theodor Schieder (ed.), *Geschichte als Wissenschaft*, München 1968, p. 216.

⁶⁹ Jürgen Kocka, *Theorieprobleme der Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, in: Hans-Ulrich Wehler (ed.), *Geschichte und Soziologie*, Königstein/Ts., 1984, S. 312.

constellations of (social) conditions.⁷⁰ Motives of acting persons could not be understood by using the concepts of those acting, actions could not be understood by the motives communicated by those historical figures and historical processes cannot be analyzed in terms of intentional actions alone. Therefore, social preconditions needed external hypotheses, implemented from the »outside«.⁷¹

One of these external theories and hypotheses was the modernization theory, which received paramount importance within historical social science. Theories of modernization are conceptionally comparative theories, because modernization focuses on the long-term transformations that began in Western Europe but integrated the whole world into its dynamics. Theories of modernization try to fathom the similarities and differences of societies compared and to integrate them into a common theoretical framework, the differences notwithstanding. According to Hans-Ulrich Wehler, the modernisation theory was the only comprehensive analysis of historical problems, molding theory and empirical enquiry, that could be used for historical comparative approaches.⁷² In the 1980s, theories of modernization became obsolete and even their most prominent adherents dissociated with them to a certain degree. But in spite of the demise of modernization theories, comparative history remained a valid and important tool of modern social history, nowadays termed »societal history« (Gesellschaftsgeschichte). In this new concept, comparison is still important because it is a methodological control device for a differentiation between historical individuality and general elements of historical explanation. This includes the comparison of societies which are non-western or even premodern.⁷³

On an epistemological level, I argue, that comparison in history is not only possible, but necessary, even unavoidable. Cognition and perception are defined as constructive processes and not as representations of an independent »outward« reality. The Italian historian Giambattista Vico expressed this view as early as 1710, when he wrote »[...] if the senses are (active) abilities, it follows that we create the colors by seeing, the tastes by tasting, the tones by hearing, coldness and hotness by touching.«⁷⁴ Historical cognition and

⁷⁰ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Anwendung von Theorien in der Geschichtswissenschaft*, in: Thomas Nipperdey; Jürgen Kocka (eds.), *Theorie und Erzählung in der Geschichte*, vol. 3, München 1979, p. 28.

⁷¹ Ibidem

⁷² Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte*, Göttingen 1975, p. 61. Wehler was also among the first historians to demand a modern historical comparison of Germany and the United States, based on a theory of modernization. »The theory of modernization would allow - I assume - to center a synthetic presentation of German history around the same focal points, which would allow to structure a synthetical presentation of the history of the United States.« Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte*, p. 63.

⁷³ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte*, p. 40.

⁷⁴ Giambattista Vico, *Liber metaphysicus: De antiquissima Italorum sapientia, liber*

perception therefore depends on the constructive processes of historians who define historical reality by describing and analyzing it.

The biology and physiology of human perception works in such ways that comparison is an integral part of it. On a higher level than the biology of cognition, pertaining to complex entities or systems, this is also true. Observation in this context is defined as the operations of differentiation and denotation.⁷⁵ Differentiation is defined as »marking a border« to the effect of »creating two sides within one form« - according to Spencer Brown. Denotation is nothing more and less than the definition from which side the thus defined border will be transgressed.⁷⁶ Comparison in this sense is the logical antithesis of differentiation, because it combines as being-different perceived phenomena for the purpose of verifying the validity of those borders. Transgression of borders therefore seems to be the precondition of comparison, at least on an epistemological level. To be a historian, therefore, implies historical comparison.⁷⁷ There are at least six problematic areas of comparison one could look at in an attempt to correlate American and German concepts of racism, nationalism and xenophobia, and I am aware of the dangers of gross generalization in proposing these six areas for further research.

1) The early period of nationalism (1812-1850).

This comparison would focus chronologically on the »early period« of nationalism between 1812 and 1850, with the emergence of a fervent sense of American exceptionalism in the aftermath of the war of 1812 and the development of a strong national nativist movement, directed against Catholics and immigrants. In roughly the same time frame, Germany saw expressions of a nationalist mood that originated in the wars against Napoleon and became part of the »Vormärz« period leading to the Revolution in 1848/49.

primus, Naples 1858, chapter Vn, paragraph 3. Citation in Ernst von Glasersfeld, *Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit und des Begriffs der Objektivität*, in: Heinz Gumin; Armin Möhler (eds.), *Einführung in den Konstruktivismus*, München 1985 (Schriften der Carl Friedrich von Siemens Stiftung, vol. 10), p. 18.

⁷⁵ Niklas Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung*, Köln, Opladen, 1970, p. 73-81. Quoted by Georg Lohmann, »Beobachtung« und Konstruktion von Wirklichkeit. Bemerkungen zum Luhmannschen Konstruktivismus, in: Gebhard Rusch; Siegfried J. Schmidt (eds.) *Konstruktivismus und Sozialtheorie*, Frankfurt a. M., 1994, p. 205-219, p. 215.

⁷⁶ Ibidem.

⁷⁷ Otto Hintze was among the first German historians to emphasize the general feasibility of comparative historiography. He maintained however that individual history was primary and comparison was a second step. »[...] One can compare in order to find the general, which is put as a foundation of the things compared; and one can compare, to get a better grasp of the one thing and to separate it from the other«, he wrote in 1929. Otto Hintze, *Soziologie und Geschichte* (edited by Gerhard Oestreich), Göttingen 1964 (2nd edition), vol. 2, S. 251.

2) Expansion and Manifest Destiny (1848-1898).

This comparative framework concentrates on the period between 1848 and 1918. In German History this chronological scheme correlates with the time between the failed German Revolution of 1848, German colonialism in Africa with its open racism and its subsequent entanglement in nationalist policies that lead to the First World War. On the American side one could mention the Mexican War with the acquisition of California, the end of Reconstruction with its increasing oppression of African Americans, the exclusion measures against Asian immigrants and the Spanish-American War. Internally the US went through a phase of extreme racism directed against Latin Americans, Asian Americans and African Americans in all sections of the country, although the worst expressions of this racism with lynchings and race riots were to be found in the southern section of the country directed against Blacks.⁷⁸

3) »Scientific racism« and internal colonization (1870-1933).

In a third attempt to compare Germany and the US, one could discuss the diverse attempts to patrol the ideological borders of the concept of race between 1870 and 1933. In America, social Darwinism, scientific racism, new concepts of ethnology and anthropology coincided with a German debate on Eugenics, Anti-Semitism and the development of concepts that led to the annihilation of human beings in gas chambers of the Nazi concentration camps.

4) Gender and Race.

The topic of this comparative approach is proposed to be the cross sections of race and gender in both countries in the twentieth century. In the German case one will have to talk about the attempts of liberal groups to change the attitudes of the people and the state in regard to sexual politics, as in the case of the abortion laws and the persecution of homosexuals. Very often, opposition against a more liberal stance in gender matters came from extreme nationalist and reactionary groups that played on deeply internalized fears of an ethnically and or culturally mixed society. The discrimination of Jews in Germany went along with a sexist rhetoric of sexual purity. On the other hand it is hard to imagine the Nazi state functioning without the active support of at least a substantial portion of German women, be it through tacit agreement or active involvement (»Täterinnen« discussion). Here, the treatment of Jewish men in the Nazi press before and after 1933, depicted as sexual perverts, lusting for »aryan« women, deserves more attention than hitherto given. In America, the lynch murders that increased after 1918 and the subsequent political mobilization to end these atrocities have to do with concepts of gender in the South and other portions of the US. Lynch mobs very often defended their

⁷⁸ Norbert Finzsch, *Rassistische Gewalt im Süden der USA, 1865-1920*, in: *Kriminologisches Journal* 26 (1994): 191-209.

actions on the ground that they defended the »purity« of white women, thereby defining race also in sexual terms. The successful fight against lynch murders cannot be understood without the crucial role played by both, white and African American women, who opposed the racist attempts to use gender as a means to control the African American underclass in the South.

5) Identity and marginalization.

On this level of comparison one could try to shift the angle of perception from the top down approach to a view that encompasses those groups that are marginalized by racism, nationalism or xenophobia. This approach is more or less an »unhistorical« i.e. asynchronistic attempt to delve into the problem of assimilation under pressure. In how far uses the nation state the concept of citizenship over a »longue durée« to exclude »aliens« and how do excluded groups react in claiming that they are in fact »citizens«. Phenomena that could be discussed include the assimilation of Jews in Germany between 1794 and 1848 and the struggle for the political and social emancipation of African Americans between 1920 and 1960.

6) Political parties and the racist/xenophobic impulse.

The idea behind this comparative level is that both, the American and the German political party systems, are relatively stable and that racist and xenophobic syndromes seem to be connected to a crisis of the national party systems, be it as a structural change or as a formal shift within the system. Penetration of large segments of the society by racist/nativist groups seem only to be possible during or after the restructuring of political parties. This can be shown, we think, for Germany between 1914 and 1933 and for the US between 1830 and 1860.

It is evident that a single historian or even a carefully selected group of interdisciplinary scholars, united for a conference that cannot go on forever, cannot deal with all of the proposed areas of comparison in one book. They are desiderata of historical research, and I am aware of the voluntaristic energy that is needed for each of those proposals.

2.3 Discourse versus social history

Social history is out Discourse analysis is definitely in. As a consequence of the »linguistic turn«, literary criticism and literary history have developed into fields, in which, based on the writings of Nietzsche and Heidegger and ideas brought into the United States by authors like Foucault and Derrida, Western rationality has become a focus of critique. At the same time, there occurred a shift in what was perceived as »evidence« not only within literary studies but also in historiography. Critiques of what is called a »vogue« by some, a »fashion« by others, focus on the fact that exactly the same intellectual

traditions central to the rise of irrationality, fascism and Nazism are supposed to have become components of modern theory. This may be deplorable in the context of literary criticism but, according to some critics, it becomes outright unbearable if used for the explanation of fascism, racism or studies of the holocaust. It is hard, in fact, to confront millions of victims of German fascism or of American chattel slavery the on the basis of discourses, if one »imagines« at the same moment the corpses piled up in German concentration camps in 1945. The same, it can be argued, applies to the historiography of American slavery and of the thousands of African Americans who were victims of lynchings. It is difficult to imagine hundreds of thousands of slaves, barely escaped from death by starvation on the slave ship, sold into captivity after the infamous »middle passage«, exclusively as part of a discourse. This is not intended to deny that there has in fact been in different times and under different circumstances different discourses on slavery, racist exclusions, racisms and fascisms. The problem we have to tackle, though, is whether discourse can embrace »matter«, »reality« and »bodies«, whether there is »reality« outside of discourse or whether we cannot escape the iron cage of language in talking even about practices. Let me cite just one example: When the African American James Irwin was killed by a white mob, his death, as cruel and bestial as it was, nevertheless followed a certain pre-ordained pattern that bore significance in itself. I quote from one of the earlier books on lynching, a 1933 study by Arthur Raper: »Mobs are capable of unbelievable atrocity. James Irwin at Ocilla, Georgia, was jabbed in his mouth with a sharp pole. Hies toes were cut off joint by joint His fingers were similarly removed, and his teeth extracted with wire pliers. After further unmentionable mutilations [i.e. castration, N.F.], the Negro's still living body was saturated with gasoline and a lighted match was applied. As the flames leaped up, hundreds of shots were fired into the dying victim. During the day, thousands of people from miles around rode out to see the sight. Not till nightfall did the officers remove the body and bury it.«⁷⁹

It is important to note that a) the atrocity of the murder of James Irwin, as undeniably as it had happened, itself had strong resemblance to a text, because it »meant« something to on-lookers and the absent African Americans who were supposed to »understand« it as a warning not to transgress the limits assigned to them by a racist white majority and b) it is equally important that we - as nonwitnesses - know about this event from texts like that by Draper only. We have no access to that death except through texts.

One of the most eminent historians of Germany, Jane Caplan, expressed serious doubts about the applicability of deconstruction in history as follows: « [...] what can one usefully say about National Socialism as an ideology or a

⁷⁹ Arthur F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching*, Montclair NJ 1969, first edition [Chapel Hill] 1933 (Patterson Smith Reprint Series in Criminology, Law Enforcement, and Social Problems, publication No. 25), 6-7.

political movement and regime via theories that appear to discount rationality as a mode of explanation, that resist the claims of truth, relativize and disseminate power, cannot assign responsibility clearly, and do not privilege (one) truth or morality over (multiple) interpretations?»⁸⁰

In order to be fair, though, it is important, that there are as many postmodern theories as there is coal in Manchester. Deconstruction may be the least useful theory in coping with problems of racism and National Socialism. But it should be noted too, that rationality is by no means a safeguard against racist discourses and racist practices, as I have tried to show in concordance with Goldberg earlier. It is too easy to dismiss postmodern theory in history generally as a case of historical amnesia or historical ignorance. One of the most influential postmodern theoretical contributions to the wide field of discourse analysis was Foucault's writings, but other authors would have to be quoted as well, if the picture is supposed to be complete. I do not want to add my observations on the apparent re-discovery of Foucault in recent years or point out to the fact that even his impact may finally be felt in German historiography which is traditionally less open to theoretical innovation and in which the Bielefeld school still exerts the major influence.⁸¹ Foucault, who is often quoted in the debate between postmodern »scholars of discourse« and »modern« scholars of structural social history, does in fact not lend himself easily for an abuse as a propagandist of discourse analysis as the only viable way of dealing with historical complex problems. To select Foucault as a starting point in this debate is also appropriate, because his thinking contains many connections to more recent schools as New Historicism, Cultural Poetics or Cultural Materialism and even French and American deconstruction. Some of those links can be defined as exchange, some as containment of ideas.

It is obvious that Foucault does not deny the existence of a (socially and conventionally constructed) reality outside of discourses. To make my point I will just cite two texts by Foucault, that may be taken as authoritative in this context. One is his treaty on the structure of discourses, laid out in »l'Archéologie du Savoir«, written in 1969 and translated into German in 1988, in which he made clear that history with its relatively recent tendency to avoid any resemblance with a »collective memory« of which events actually had happened in historic times, had taken a position that turned historiography into discipline closer to archeology, because it tended to interpret documents immanently as »monuments«.⁸² The other text is »The Order of Things«, an archeology of humanities, as the subtitle indicates. So far, the worst anticipations of those historians are confirmed, who understand Foucault as a

⁸⁰ Jane Caplan, *Postmodernism, Poststructuralism, and Deconstruction: Notes for Historians*, in: *Central European History* 22 3/4 (1989): 274.

⁸¹ Martin Dinges, *Foucaultrezeption in Deutschland*, in: Norbert Finzsch and Robert Jütte, *Confinement*, forthcoming (Insert citation).

⁸² Michel Foucault, *Archäologie des Wissens*, Frankfurt a. M. 1988, 15.

theoretician of the dissolution or 'death' of the individual subject and of a discourse that has no political and social consequences in the present.⁸³ If everything is discourse, according to theoreticians of anti-postmodernism, how can bodies have a reality then?⁸⁴

This view, however, has a blind spot. First of all, discourses are not just »talks« or »texts«, there not simply what one finds in the newspapers, if one randomly opens the style section or what one can overhear in a casual conversation. It is important to understand that discourses are »serious« and not just contingent performative »speech acts« à la Austin and Searle.⁸⁵ Secondly, Foucault analyzes discourses according to their positivity, he is, as he himself claims, a »happy positivist« and content with this ascription.⁸⁶ There needs to be a certain »thickness« of »texts« or »speech acts« on a serious matter that qualifies these discursive events as discourses. And most important, in contradiction to Derrida's famous dictum, there is a »hors-texte«.⁸⁷ This »hors-texte«, this **Πραξη**, is called non-discursive practise.⁸⁸ Its domain is that of materiality, work and the body. Foucault establishes this area of nondiscursive practise in his attempt to explain what discourse analyses is not: It is not a history of the referent, although »such a history of the referent is possible without doubt«.⁸⁹ And he continues:

»In one word, one want to be abstinent from 'the things' completely; [one wants to] »de-present« them; [one wants to] ban their rich, heavy and immediate fullness [...]«⁹⁰

That means, of course, that there is a rich and immediate fullness of 'things' like economic or technical events. This does not mean, however, that those areas are sealed off from discourse completely. They are no actual part of discourse, but they are bound within discourses. »One has to understand discourse as a power which we exert upon things; a practise, in any case, that

⁸³ Judith Butler, **Kontingente Grundlagen: Der Feminismus und die Frage der 'Postmoderne'**, in: Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Frazer, **der Streit um die Differenz: Feminismus und Postmoderne in der Gegenwart**, Frankfurt a. M. 1993, 32-58, here 46. Later on published in English: Seyla Benhabib ... [et al.], **Feminist Contentions : A Philosophical Exchange**, New York , 1995 (Thinking Gender).

⁸⁴ Butler, **Kontingente Grundlagen**, 51.

⁸⁵ Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, **Michel Foucault: Jenseits von Strukturalismus und Hermeneutik**, Frankfurt a. M. 1987, 70-2. See also Susanne Kramann, **Silmultaneität von Körper und Sprache bei Michel Foucault**, in: **Leviathan: Zeitschrift für Sozialwissenschaft** 23 1995 (2):240-262, here 241.

⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, **Archäologie des Wissens**, 182.

⁸⁷ Jacques Derrida, **De la Grammatologie**, Paris 1967, 227.

⁸⁸ Bernhard Waidenfels, **Ordnung in Diskursen**, in: Ewald François and Bernhard Waidenfels, **Spiele der Wahrheit: Michel Foucaults Denken**, Frankfurt a. M. 1991, 277- 297, here 280.

⁸⁹ Foucault, **Archäologie des Wissens**, 72.

⁹⁰ Foucault, **Archäologie des Wissens**, 72. All translation from the German edition by Norbert Finzsch.

we force upon them.«⁹¹ Here again, we find this conspicuous dichotomy of (visible and material) 'things' and discourse that have a dialectical relationship, although Foucault always claimed wanting to do away with dialectics.⁹² What is visible ('things') cannot simply be transformed into things that are said. Bodies are not simply represented in language and language is no mirror of bodies' physical existence, since bodies belong to the realm of things visible and constitute unformed matter, a surface, on which language may place signs. The body thus is the result of the inscription of language onto that matter. It comes into existence simultaneously through the combination of visible matter and inscription of signs by language.⁹³

Simultaneity thus dissolves the dichotomy of 'reality' and 'construction' on the one hand and 'materiality' and 'écriture' on the other. Bodies become 'things' that cannot be dissolved from 'discourses' that shape our thoughts and imagination.⁹⁴ Asking ourselves, whether there is a reality outside of discourses and how we have to deal with the 'reality' of burned bodies and tortured flesh as evidence of the material side of racism, it is helpful to remind ourselves constantly of the simultaneity of body and language. Burns and scars are real but they are the ultimate inscription of discourses onto the body at the same time. The dichotomization of social history versus discourse analysis is »false« i.e. ideologically motivated. We can close this constructed gap by doing social history that does not exclude discourses and discourse analysis by including the »real world« of non-discursive practices. Social history is discourse analysis with non-discursive practises left in.

⁹¹ Michel Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses: Mit einem Essay von Ralf Konersmann*, Frankfurt a. M. 1991, 34-5.

⁹² Wolfgang Welsch, *Präzision und Suggestion: Bemerkungen zu Stil und Wirkung eines Autors*, in: Ewald; Waidenfels, *Spiele der Wahrheit*, 136-149, here 141. The dichotomy of visibility and discourse is the topic of Susanne Krasmann's enlightening article. Krasmann, *Simultaneität von Körper und Sprache*, 249-253.

⁹³ Butler, *Kontingente Grundlagen*, p. 52-3. Quoted in Krasmann, *Simultaneität von Körper und Sprache*, 253.

⁹⁴ Krasmann, *Simultaneität von Körper und Sprache*, 253.